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MR. CARL LUMHOLTZ IN NORTHERN MEXICO.

The following letter was received on the 28th of
February :

GUADALUPE Y CALVO (Chihuahua),
18 January, 1893.

. . . It is very discouraging to mail anything from here, because letters so often get lost . . . I have for some months been living such a secluded life with the natives, that an opportunity of mailing a letter but rarely offers itself . . . Since the month of July, last year, I have been travelling alone, studying the little known Tarahumare Indians.

I travel something in the manner of an Indian trader, only rougher, accompanied by one or two Mexicans, the rest of my party being made up by Indians.

In the "barrancas" which, like gigantic cracks some 3-4000 feet deep, traverse this part of the Sierra Madre from east to west, live *gentiles* (pagan) Tarahumares, who to me are the most interesting objects of study.

They cultivate maize and beans in a small way, also chilly and tobacco, and as soil fit for growing anything is scarce in this wild, rough region, they erect stone walls to secure whatever earth the rain may favorise them with from the mountain slopes, and thus terraces for cultivating are formed, exactly of the same kind as I farther to the north found, abandoned ages and ages ago. They are in possession of the domesticated animals introduced by the Spaniards, but all in a very small way ; they may also possess an iron axe or a knife, but in every other respect seem to be entirely untouched by Spanish influence. They don't speak Spanish, and are extremely timid, leaving everything behind at the sight of a stranger. They are small, but well formed and muscular, very active and extremely able to endure exertion. Their faculty of running must surely be unexcelled. When becoming civilised, the Mexicans use them for running in wild horses, in which they always succeed, bringing the horses played out in to the corral—often two or three days' work.

They still dance their *Rutubóry* and *Yúmory* to ensure good crops ; and at thanksgivings sacrifice meat and maize beer to their god, and worship several plants, one of them, called *híkory* (Spanish *Peyote*), also being prepared into an intoxicating drink. This peyote has at first a very refreshing and enlivening effect upon one's nerves, but afterwards produces a shivering feeling of cold, whose unpleasantness is so great that many of the natives cannot take this drink on this account. But it plays a great part with their religious system, and it was only because a profane man like myself was known to be in the possession of four specimens of the plant, that I once at my request was favored with a drink of the magical *híkory* ; on condition, however, that I took off my hat and sat down among the most favored men during the ceremonies. These feasts are always going on through the whole

night, and as formally and nicely as everything then is conducted, as shocking is it next morning, when the ceremonies are over, to see them all get drunk on the same beer of which they always first sacrifice to their god.

No doubt that the Tarahumares always liked to live in caves, for I find that some of them have within the memory of man changed their caves for miserable shelters of wood, moving away from the slow progress of the Mexican civilisation. At present, many of the so-called Christians live in caves during the cold weather, while a few are permanent cave-dwellers; but as regards the *gentiles* the result of my investigations so far is that many of them are permanent cave-dwellers, while during the winter almost all are so. As far as I as yet see, they have nothing to do with the cave and cliff-dwellers of the United States.

However, I yet need to be confirmed in this opinion. Also the northern Pimas, and the Tepehuanes to the south and west of them, share to a certain extent this peculiar mode of living.

As the *gentiles* are very poor, particularly now on account of the three years drought, I sometimes have difficulty of procuring even the food that I mostly have to rely upon—maize and goat's meat—but as I have the happy faculty of liking all sorts of new native dishes (mostly herbs and fruits and roots) I go rather easily through what others would call privations.

I walk on foot with my Indians in the deep and wild barrancas, having to wade up to the waist more times than even I, with my fondness for cold water baths, exactly care for, in the at present ice cold waters of the rivers. But one can stand anything in a climate like this, for the climate of the Sierra Madre is superb, or, as the doctor in Guadalupe y Calvo expresses it, distressingly healthy. Chest complaints are here unknown and I am told that neither cholera nor the grip, (the) last time these diseases reached the mountains, could make any havock here. Small-pox is the most serious disease among the Indians, who time and again are decimated by the plague.

On my recent return from the border towards the State of Durango I ascended the Cerro de Muinora in the southern neighborhood of Guadalupe y Calvo. It is probably the highest mountain in Chihuahua, I say probably, because I had not an opportunity of ascending the Cerro de Candelaria near Chuhuichupa. My aneroid showed 20.60 inches, temperature 38° Fahrenheit. Water boiled at 192.2,° temperature 51°. I surely think Muinora the highest.

I am now on my way to Nabogame and Baborigame where Tepehuanes live, and from there on I will visit the numerous *barrancas* and *arroyos* (streams) that traverse the western part of the Sierra north of here, until north of the Barranca de Urique; these are extremely interesting because here the most primitive Tarahumares are to be found.

I am writing down the language of the Tarahumares and the Tepehuanes, and am taking measurements and photographs of the people. I shall hope, when in a few months' time I am through with my present work, that my researches will help somewhat to throw light on the early history of the American race. . . .

Yours Sincerely,

CARL LUMHOLTZ.